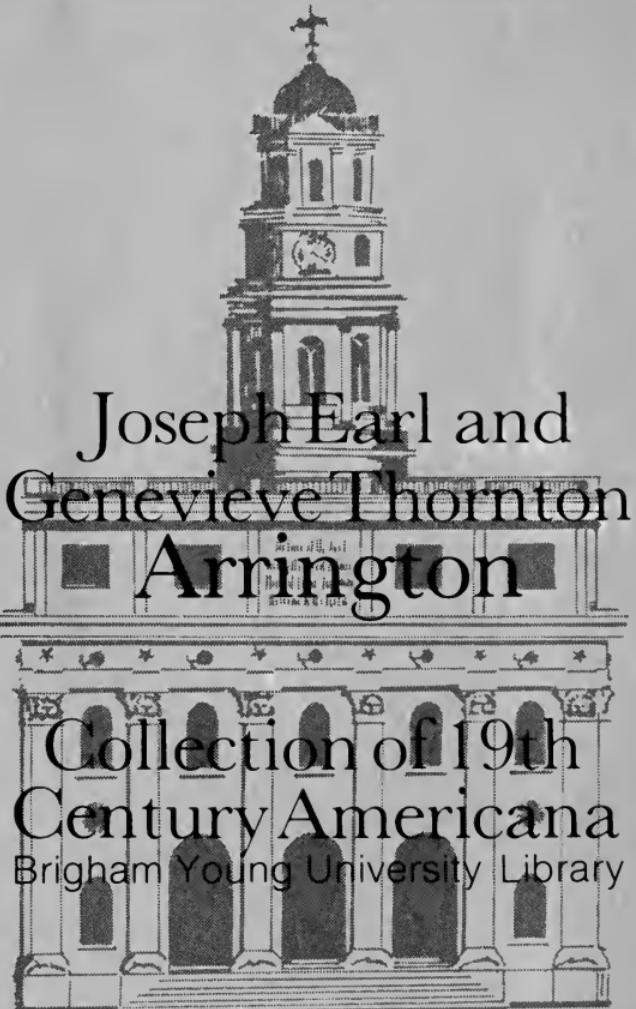


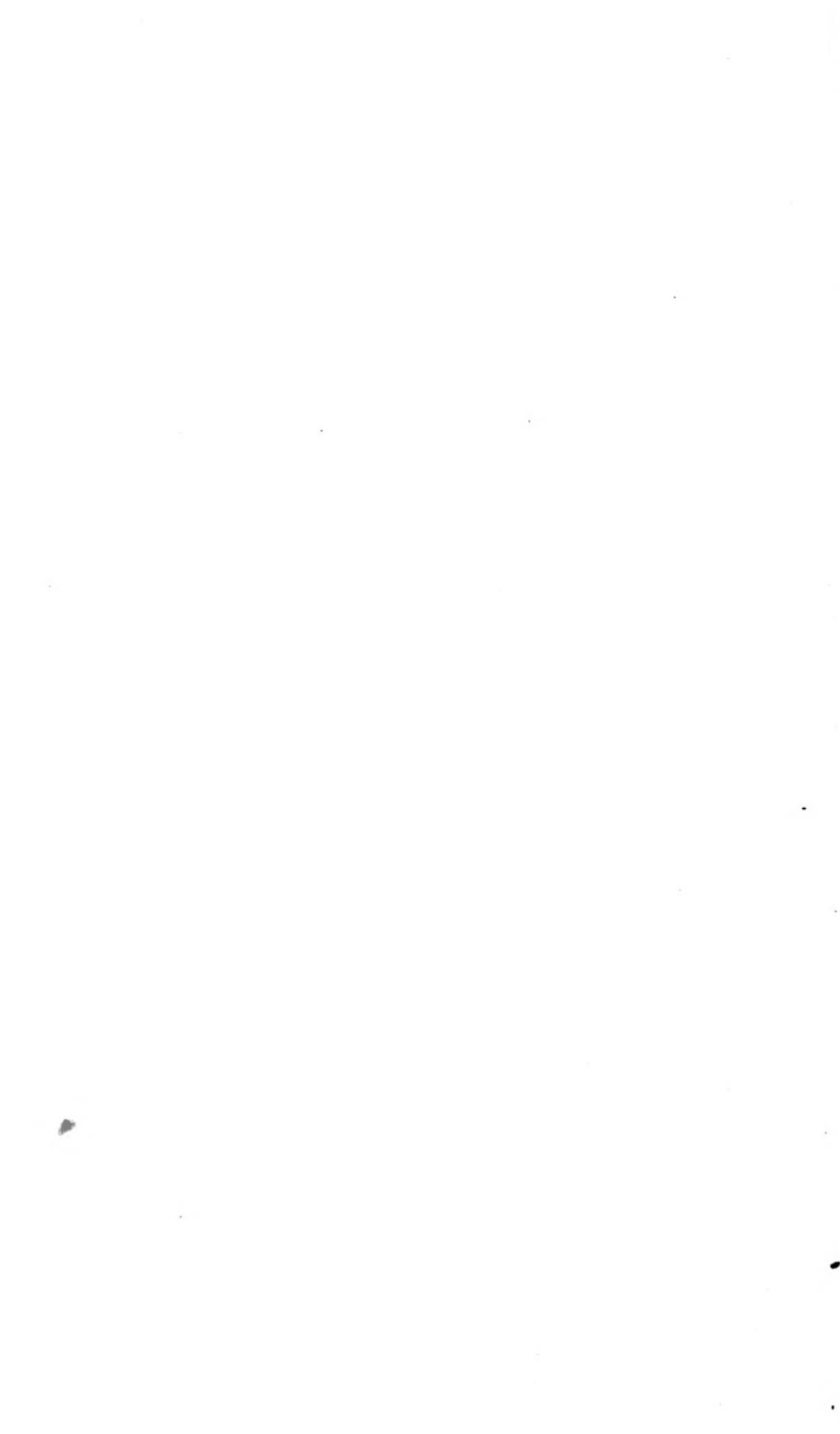
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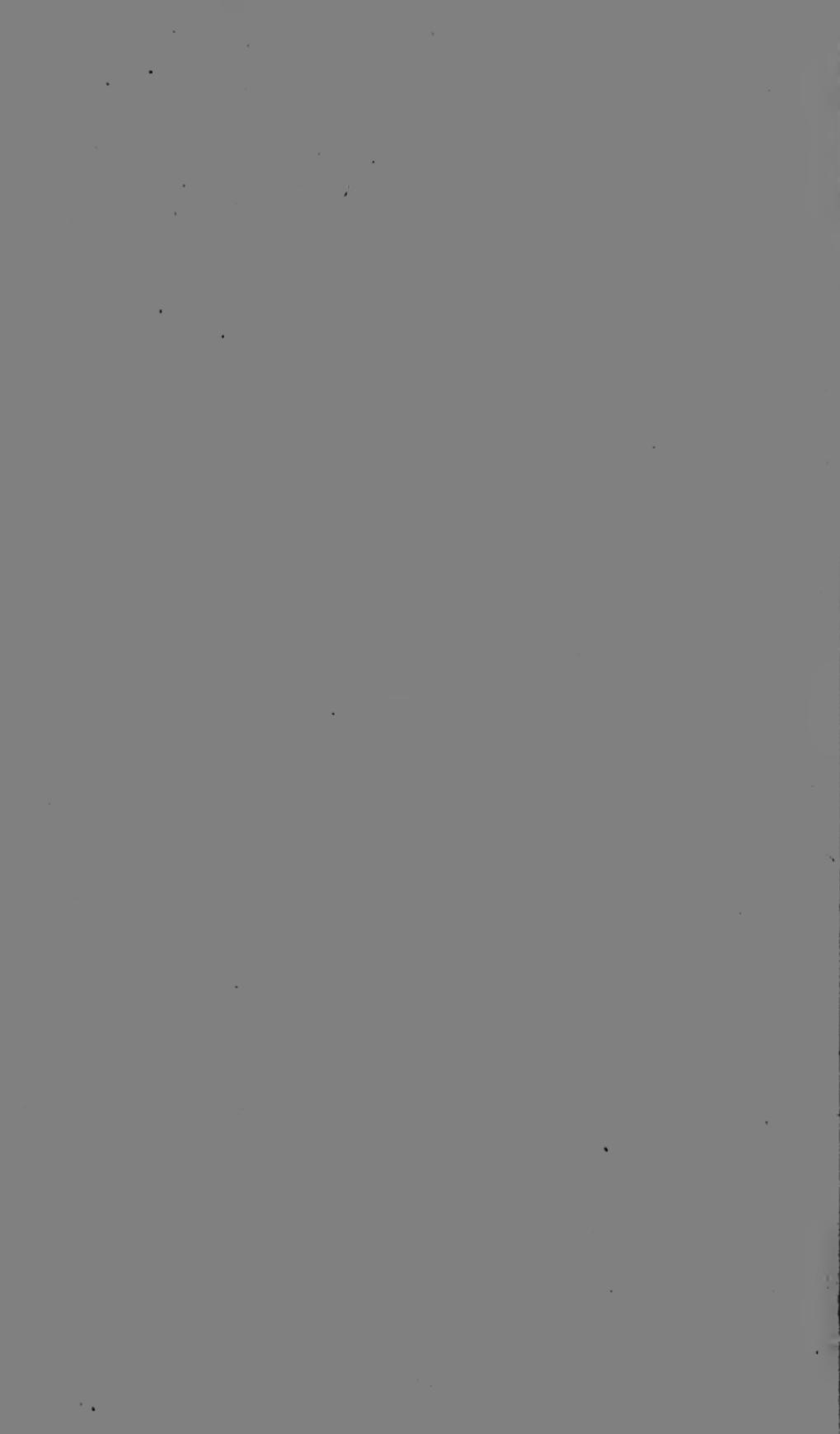


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THE

PULPIT AND TRUE FREEDOM;

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE RHODE ISLAND BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION
AT PAWTUCKET, R. I., APRIL 26, 1859.

BY

WILLIAM C. RICHARDS,

Pastor of the Brown Street Baptist Church, Providence, R. I.

“He is a freeman whom the truth makes free ;
And all are slaves beside.”

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THE

PULPIT AND TRUE FREEDOM.

"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—JOHN viii. 36.

"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."—I. COR. ii. 2.

WHO are these, my brethren, that speak to us in the earnest and significant words which I have read ? They are Christ, and Paul ; the one the Author, and the other the Apostle of Christianity ; the one the Great Teacher, and the other the great disciple of our holy faith ; the one the Divine Cross-Bearer, and the other the inspired Cross-Preacher for a lost world ; the one the Perfect Pattern, and the other the indefatigable copyist of Holiness ; the one the Glorious Captain, and the other the intrepid

soldier of our salvation ; the one the Great Redeemer, and the other the great redeemed from sin ; the one the King of Glory, and the other His chief ambassador upon earth.

A rare sublimity characterizes each of these passages—the relative measure of which is exactly proportioned to the inherent and essential dignity and glory of their authors, in those relations to each other which I have indicated. Any words of Him, of whom it was once said, and is forever true, “Never man spake like this man,” would be, in themselves, a theme more than sufficient for angelic discourse ; and how infinitely, therefore, must they not exceed the capacity of the human preacher. It is with no light estimate of the meaning and importance of Christ’s words, that I have added to them the words of Paul. Nor is it with the vain and presumptuous thought of adding force to what the Master said, by employing the language of the servant in connection therewith. I should not ask you to behold the glorious sun of our starry system, and

hope to augment its magnificence and splendour in your eyes, by placing, in juxtaposition with it, the noblest of its satellites ; nor should I spread out before you, the shoreless ocean, and think to increase your conception and impression of its sublimity, by directing your attention, at the same moment, to a stream which was pouring its tribute into its bosom.

Yet might I find occasion and justification for pointing out to you both central orb and circling planet, both mighty sea and minute river ; the more perfectly to display and illustrate the wisdom which originated and directed both.

The declaration of Christ, and the determination of Paul, have an intimate connection, not altogether unlike that of sun and satellite ; and I have put them together, at this time in your view, with no other aim or desire than to magnify the divine principle of both—the power of the CROSS.

The words of Christ unfold a grand and vital doctrine, while those of Paul express a purpose growing essentially out of the doc-

trine, and borrowing from it all its power and perpetuity. If I have not misapprehended the significance of my twofold text, it affords us, as a theme for earnest and prayerful consideration :

THE RELATION OF THE PULPIT TO TRUE FREEDOM.

The development of the subject will involve an examination of the two oracles which I have quoted, in the order of their importance and succession. The words of Christ are the enunciation of the vital doctrine, that *The Gospel of the Son of God is the only Source of True Freedom*. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

The denial, in these words, that there is any perfect freedom without the Gospel, could not be made more positive and unequivocal by any negative form which might be given to the text. It would be nothing less than blasphemy, to say that the Holy Spirit meant less than this, in the words which the Son of Man spake by His in-

spiration, for that would be to impute trifling or levity to the Divine Speaker—in implying more than He really intended to teach. There cannot be a doubt, upon any ingenuous mind, that Jesus told the Jews, who were gathered about Him in the Treasury of the Temple, that the Freedom, which merited the holy name, was solely and eternally in His gift. Although these Jews believed upon Him, their faith was so feeble as yet, that when He addressed them in these gracious words,—“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall *make you free*,”* they were immediately offended by the implied charge that they were in bondage,—that they were slaves hitherto. With quick resentment they replied, “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest thou—‘Ye shall be made free!’”† Would not a moment’s reflection have arrested this vaunting answer upon their very lips? Could they have remembered their condition of vassalage to the Roman, disguised

* John viii. 32.

† John viii. 33.

only by the poor pretence of a Judean sovereignty ; could they have heard, at that instant, the drum-beat of the imperial cohorts in their hallowed city ; could they have felt the concealed fetters of the Idumēan tyrant, at whose royal feet they cringed,—they would not have dared to say to the Galilean prophet, “We were never in bondage to any man.” They forgot all this for the time. They forgot also the humility which became the descendants of a long captive nation, a nation whose annals began in the bitter bondage of Pharaoh, and were subsequently burdened with seventy years of woeful exile and shame in Babylon. Christ did not recall these humiliating truths to their treacherous memory ; and what teacher, besides Him, would have foregone the opportunity to put them to shame ! But He had too much pity, too much love in His great heart, to upbraid them beyond the need ; and now He thought not of their Roman bondage, of their galling political slavery—past or existent. He was already at His work for Eternity.

He saw their spiritual enthrallment, and He yearned to deliver them from it. He knew that they could not effect their own deliverance, and that it was beyond the power of any human arm, to break that heavy and perilous yoke from their necks. The true freedom which they needed, was in His keeping and in His gift.

And here, upon the very threshold of our subject, an important question presents itself:—

In what does True Freedom consist?

A misconception at this point would be as fatal to our just estimate of the truth of the text, as a deflection of the magnetic needle would be to the homeward bound ship upon an unknown sea. The eager mariner might congratulate himself upon favouring gales, which carried his vessel forward at a degree of speed grateful to his heart; but if his compass was false, the blue headlands of his native shores would not loom upon his strained sight within any reasonable space of his careful reckoning; and, even while he was wondering

that they did not appear in the far distance, his misguided ship might be about to founder upon a strange coast.

Let us search, then, for the harbour of True Freedom by the irreversible compass of God's Word—lest we make shipwreck of our hopes upon unfriendly shores. That compass is at hand. We have found it already. It is *truth*. “The truth shall make you free,” said the Great Teacher—not to the Jews alone—but to you and to me, and to all who groan beneath any form of bondage. *True Freedom is the absence of all restraint imposed by evil*. It is not, certainly, a condition of absolute unrestraint, for such a state is impossible to dependent creatures, both in their involuntary subjection to the Infinite Author of their being, and in their narrower, yet multiform and voluntary, obligations to their fellow-men. They are subject to perpetual restraint from the Divine Sovereignty. They have indeed no freedom of any sort, without the permission of God; but since Justice and Love are es-

sential attributes of the Divine Character, it is clearly impossible that any restraint which He puts upon His creatures should have, in it, any element of evil. He restrains us only for our highest good, and for His greatest glory. The checks to our wills and actions which come from above, interfere, in no wise, with our full enjoyment of the most absolute liberty possible to our moral nature. The restraints, moreover, which spring out of our social relations, are not necessarily evil. Many of these are strictly just, and unavoidable, without perils and penalties as the result of their infringement. The well-being of society is bound up with numerous restraints upon the personal freedom of its constituent members. No one has the right to do wrong either to himself or to others, and every restraint of righteous law, of beneficent contract, of a just conscience, is not a shackle upon the fair limbs of Liberty ; but, on the contrary, an ornament of gold about her neck. The restrictions which the common weal imposes, are

indeed the jewels of Freedom, and stripped of these she is poor and despicable.

Such restraints are not the offspring of evil. They are rather the legitimate products of Truth, which is everywhere, and at all times, the divinely commissioned and divinely qualified antagonist of evil. Clad in God's panoply, Truth goes forth against every shape and guise in which Sin appears among men, to afflict and oppress them. By her celestial energy and her untiring zeal, she vanquishes error here and slays it there ; and with every overthrow of the enemy, some bond of evil, some shackle of shame, some unlawful restraint, falls from the body, or the soul, of human victims of wrong. Thus the *truth* makes free. Truth is competent to enfranchise man from every restraint which does not constitute a part of his filial relationship to God, or of his fraternal compact with his brethren. To accomplish this grand and beneficent result, it is essential, however, that the victory of truth over evil shall be complete and universal ; for while the pestilen-

tial breath of sin atmospheres human souls, wrong and woe will breed in corrupt places, and spread their desolations far and wide, involving, besides their unhappy subjects, multitudes of others, themselves, it may be, innocent of crime.

True freedom is the possession of God's favour. He is free whom God approves—free in the highest sense—even while he may wear bonds forged for him by injustice and cruelty ; or while he may suffer restraints incidental to a social position burdened with poverty and misfortune. He is *not free*, on the other hand, who, with unfettered will, revels in the largest license of appetite, participates in the rights and privileges of political equality with his peers, ranges through every field of speculative philosophy, and boasts loudly of his social, political, intellectual and religious liberty,—while yet he has no aspirations towards heaven, no sense of sacred obligation to God, no controlling love of truth for its own sake, and, more than all, for the sake of Him

from whom the truth cometh, with its divine virtue of enfranchisement to man. He is a slave, in the midst of a loud-vaunted freedom. The bonds of sin and the fetters of evil are eating into his very vitals. As he moves in society, he clanks the iron chains of a moral and spiritual tyranny. He thinks himself his own master, the while he is Satan's bondsman, and the slave of his own evil nature. The most melancholy feature of his slavery is the enthrallment of his conscience, which should admonish him of his peril, but is lulled, instead, in the embrace of a harlot liberty. If, now, you touch the civil or political freedom of this unhappy victim, or menace it through others, his whole nature kindles into vehemence of indignation and resistance. He will pour out his life's blood rather than resign the charter of his equality with freemen. And this bold defence of his rights is nothing less than manly—is even heroic in the esteem of all. If he dies in the conflict, he falls with honour, and reaps a martyr's applause. And yet this free-

dom is the very least part of his guerdon as an immortal—a part so small, in comparison with the true freedom of which I am speaking, that it might be dropped, as a link out of the whole chain, and bear no greater proportion to the remaining length, than the little fragment of his physical life bears to the ceaseless duration of his soul's immortality.

Far be it from me to depreciate the real worth of that freedom which is our national, our political, our religious birthright, in this land. I can sympathize with the honest and grateful exultation of the man, who, holding in his hand the magnificent franchises of a free constitution, and gazing upon the fluttering banner which is, at once, the symbol and the pledge of their force, exclaims, "*I am a freeman.*" Yea, more : I can lift my earnest, humble supplication to the GOD OF TRUTH, that He will send forth, with divine energy, that godlike agent to pour light into every place where unjust chains are riveted upon men, and, in His own time, to break every bond

that is displeasing in His holy sight.] I would not claim to be a man, if my eyes had no tears, my heart no tenderness, my soul no shame, for the tyranny of man over those in his own image. I thank my God that there flows not in my heart's mysterious channels, this hour, one drop of blood that does not quicken and glow with the hope and the expectation of a day of universal, enlightened, happy political and civil liberty for the human race. But this freedom will not anticipate the universal enfranchisement of man from ignorance and vice. While these exist, true freedom is impossible to all within their blighting, blasting influence. It cannot live in an atmosphere which the lightnings of God's truth have not purified.

True Freedom cannot exist among men without the Gospel. Its divine charter was held, for a little space, in Eden, by two beings, the representatives of all our race. But they surrendered it in an evil hour, and had there not been, in later ages of the world, another memorable garden—had there been no Gethsemane, man

would have been a helpless, hopeless, joyless slave, to all eternity. The new charter of his freedom, devised in God's Eternal Councils, and drawn up, with consummate wisdom, in the long interval of man's descent from Edenic purity to Romanic and Hellenic pollution, was issued upon Calvary.

If we scan the antecedent ages with microscopic closeness, we shall not discover the minutest trace of true freedom outside of the pale of God's church in the wilderness. The Abrahamic and the Mosaic periods—marked by the rule of a divine theocracy, and realizing, by anticipation, the advent of the Son of God—comprehended the *elements* of that freedom. Under God's favour, the people might have been always *free*; but beneath His frown, which fell upon them when the shadow of their vast iniquities eclipsed His smiles, they dragged the heavy chains of Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Roman slavery.

Outside of Israel's sacred camp, there meets the eye of the explorer—from the first to the

second Adam—only a gloomy and God-forsaken scene. “The dark places of the earth,” says the Psalmist, of his period, “are full of the habitations of cruelty.”*

Shall we look for freedom beneath the dominant astrology of Egypt, and in the keeping of her heathen priests and soothsayers? Did the Sabian idolatry of the mighty Assyrian empire kindle a single spark of the sacred fire in the breasts of the people? Did the Syrian Astarte, the Babylonian Mylitta, the Phœnician Thammuz, receive their obscene and sanguinary worship from freedom-loving hosts? Shall we search for the hid treasure by the red glare of the barbaric splendour which invested the kings and satraps of the Persian empire—a splendour which reflects the blood and woe of a wretched peasantry throughout the kingdom? Will Republican Carthage, with her Phœnician heritage of sanguinary and disgusting idolatry, reveal the blessing in her keeping?

And when we descend the stream of time

* Psalm 74 : 20.

into the golden age of Greece, and explore her grand old civilization—her military glory, her vast commercial progress, her glittering æsthetic development, and, above all, her profound speculative philosophy—shall we find, reflected in any of these trophies of human achievement, the tokens of a spirit of true freedom? Alas! the civilization, the taste, the refinement of Greece, were steeped, to the very eyes, in the most revolting licentiousness; and her philosophy, despite the sublime infusion of the ideas and the blood of her pure-minded Socrates, failed utterly to lift its devotees any nigher to the source of True Freedom, than the polished shrines and gilded altars of deified men, or the creations of a poetical, but still polluting mythology. The elementary principle of true freedom, the knowledge and fear of the Triune God, was totally lacking in the Hellenic civilization and religion. The freedom of the Greeks—and not less that of the rival Roman empire—was a structure of towering height, builded upon

the sands of selfishness, and not upon the rock of God's favour. The confusion of tongues which arrested the impious work of the Babel builders, was not more certainly the divine rebuke of human pride, than the early decline and terrible overthrow of the psuedo freedom of those ancient republics. Because God's hand was not at the bases of Greek and Roman liberty, His finger was laid at length upon their presumptuous pinnacles, and they fell, and,

“Like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Left not a rack behind.”

If the history of the world before the Cross is thus destitute of the light of true freedom for man, will the annals of the Christian era reveal any of its pure and cheering radiance in lands upon which the Day Star from on high has not arisen? What heathen nation rejoices in the possession of this precious boon? What system of idolatry has endowed its devotees with freedom, in any of its progressive phases? But inquiries like these only mock

our deep pity for the fearful degradation which lies upon the heart of every land without the Glad Tidings. From this side of the Cross, as well as from the other, we derive the sure testimony, that *true freedom cannot exist without the Gospel.*

It will be a brief but grateful duty, at this point, to consider that *The dawn and advancing light of true freedom are clearly seen in the Gospel.*

“*If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*” Under the new charter of liberty which the Son of God brought down from heaven to poor enslaved man, a charter sealed by His own precious blood, a new and blessed era has been inaugurated. The forfeited freedom of Paradise is restored to man. He is permitted again to draw nigh to his Maker in filial love and duty. The holy light of divine truth shines into his soul, and makes him *free* from every bondage in which he was held of Satan, and of his own lusts. The Gospel is an emanation of love from God to

His lost creatures, and when man receives the Gospel he partakes of the essence of it. Love takes the place of selfishness in his soul. It is the office of the Gospel to regenerate the natural heart, and this work is the transformation of its sinful instincts and desires into holy impulses and affections. In this sublime work the truth is the efficient instrument which the Son of God employs. The truth is revealed to the sinner, that he is under the terrible bondage of the law—that he is exposed to eternal death—that from this imminent peril God has provided a way of escape—that the blessed freedom comes through the Cross. All this divine truth is poured upon his conscience by the Holy Spirit ; and the truth, believed and obeyed, makes the bondsman free. This new creature is now the slave of sin no longer ; and, freed from the dominion of sin, the *truth* has uninterrupted entrance into his soul, and becomes his guide to the freedom of the skies, forever and forever.

What the Gospel does for one, it is compe-

tent to do for all ; and, from the hour of its first promulgation until now, it has been extending the area of freedom in many lands. Under its divine influences there have sprung up, in moral wastes, the beautiful institutions of social, civil and intellectual liberty. These have always followed the march of Christianity into the wilderness, and over the ruins of the worn-out civilizations of the world. Civilization is never the herald of the Cross ; but the Cross has always been the blessed precursor of civilization to the savage, and of new hope to the nations whose dreams of freedom had vanished like the morning dew. The truth of God must find entrance among a people before their freedom can begin. That truth has made multitudes free in different climes. Beneath the beautiful skies which bend over our own wide-spreading territory, resting like an arch upon the two great oceans, the blessed leaven of Gospel truth has been working silently, but with omnipotent force, until it has permeated our social and political and intellectual

institutions, and given to them an element of freedom at once valuable and enduring.

What, my brethren, would American freedom be to-day without the Gospel ? Neither I nor you can draw the dark picture ; but we can all give thanks to God that the grand problem of true freedom for man,—temporal and spiritual freedom,—is being worked out in our land in the light of the Cross. We are advancing towards the sublime result. The processes are slow and perplexing, but they go forward under God's eye, and while He looks on, it is with an unfaltering purpose to correct the errors and advance the work.

Let us not distrust His divine power and grace, not even while we look apprehensively at that system of servitude, which enters into the social fabric of a vast portion of our land. That is a dark part of the problem, but God can bring light out of darkness. It cannot be solved in an hour. It may take an *era* for its solution. The Gospel is in the midst of it, pouring in the light which maketh free. The

Gospel must solve it, and it will, for God's glory, and in God's time. And let us not forget, that the freedom which abideth forever is above all earthly freedom in excellence, and that its blessed franchise alone makes us citizens of the New Jerusalem.

"He is a freeman whom the truth makes free ;
And all are slaves beside."

"If the Son make you free, then are ye free indeed."

Having thus considered Christ's *doctrine*, we are prepared to notice Paul's determination in its relation to it ; and I shall attempt to show from both, that the mission of the pulpit is limited to the preaching of Gospel liberty to the captives of sin. "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

This was the language of the Apostle to the Corinthians, and it is the utterance of an earnest, deliberate purpose, formed in the outset of his apostolic work in Corinth. He must have had reasons of no small weight for coming to such a

determination. It was an extraordinary resolution. He was going to one of the most brilliant cities in the world—a city famous for its gayety and dissipation, as well as for its philosophy and learning. He was going thither to challenge the attention of the Greeks to a new religion—one as far removed from theirs, both in its spirit and ritual, as heaven is from earth. It was the object of scorn and contempt in Athens and in other capitals, and the Apostle knew that his preaching of the Cross was foolishness to the Greeks. In these circumstances, why did he not resolve to approach the Corinthians with some fascinating harangues upon their own philosophy, or with some honeyed flatteries of their wisdom, and so gain their attention and bespeak their good will? He might have done all this, for he was perfectly familiar with their polytheism, with their philosophy, and with their poetry. Or, he could have charmed the quick Corinthian ear, and delighted the fickle Corinthian fancy, with learned and ingenious lectures upon Rabbinical

law and literature. This plan would have brought him into contact with the sages and the scholars and the priests of Corinth ; and through them he could have reached the people to any extent. Their attention gained, their prejudices disarmed, he could have introduced the doctrines of the Cross of Christ—not too boldly, not too persistently, at first, but by degrees, as his audiences would bear them. Why did not Paul,—the learned, the discreet, the cultivated, the experienced man,—why did he not determine to *know everything* among the pleasure-seeking Corinthians ; to make law and letters, and art and science, all stepping-stones to the popular favour ? There must have been something peculiar in his instructions—something that bound him up to a course so opposite to the one we have imagined—something that set worldly wisdom and policy at naught. There was indeed this something, my hearers ; and let us go back a few years in his history to discover what it was.

You need not to be told that Paul was once

an untiring persecutor of those who called upon the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and that his conversion was effected by a miraculous vision, which he saw near the city of Damascus, as he was going thither, commissioned to do violence to the church. That vision was a dazzling and a blinding light, which smote him and his followers to the ground. Then came there a voice from the glory, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" To the bewildered inquiry of Saul, "*Who art thou, Lord?*" the following solemn answer was returned: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: but rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and in-

heritage among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”*

That “ light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun,” and that sublime commission in the voice of Jesus, Paul never forgot. Not for a moment, did the sight or the sound forsake his transformed soul. He might forget Rabbinical lore and Greek wisdom ; but what he saw and heard that day, was written on his heart forever ! That constituted the something, which we have supposed must have affected his determination, as expressed in the text. And was it not enough to make him utter it, and to make him keep it, to the day of his death ? It had this twofold effect. Paul was henceforth a preacher of the Gospel, and nothing else ; neither a reformer of political evils, nor a crusader against social abuses ; neither an amender of the laws, nor a disclaimer of moral defects in the civil code. All these existed in the state and in society. All these, I doubt not, filled his great heart with

* Acts xxvi., 15-18.

sorrow ; and to the remedy of them all, he had perpetual heed, within the grander and all-comprehensive scope of his commission. But to have regarded with direct earnestness either of these results, would have been to do both more and less than his charter required ; *more*, in that it did not make him a law-mender, and *less*, in that he would have aimed almost infinitely lower than the mark it set before him.

The man who is required to turn a vast wheel which governs and moves a complicated system of machinery, never commits the folly of leaving his post to give a special impulse to one of the minor wheels. Such a misdirection of effort would be utterly useless, for although the minor wheel moved with the force applied, the mighty engine would come to a stand still, and all the interests which hung upon its shaft would be suspended, and perhaps damaged. What account would such an engineer be able to give to his employer ? And how would the Apostle Paul, to whom Jesus of Nazareth had

so solemnly committed the great trust of "turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,"—how would he have accounted to his Master, if he had ceased from this grand work to turn men, who were yet in darkness and in Satan's power,—not into light, not unto God, but from one social theory, or political preference, or moral influence, to another—a change perhaps essentially involved in the translation to effect which, the Divine machinery of the Gospel was put in motion at so vast a cost!

Saul of Tarsus knew nothing of the omnipotent energy of the Gospel. Saul contemplated it entirely from a worldly point of view, and in the light of worldly wisdom. Saul saw the power which it had over the people, and, doubtless, accounted for it upon some philosophical principle which satisfied his own mind. Saul did not look for anything supernatural in it. The miracle of Pentecost was no miracle to him. Its tongues of fire, its mighty rushing wind, its multitudinous lan-

guages, he reckoned mere illusions of excited and distempered minds. Saul looked at the Cross in its natural ignominy. Saul saw Jesus of Nazareth nailed upon it as an impostor. Saul had heard, it may be, of the Divine commission to the unlettered fishermen (and other ignoble men who followed the Galilean teacher,) to carry His Gospel into all the world, and counted it infatuation. At all this, Saul, the self-sufficient man of the world, the self-righteous Pharisee, the zealous "Hebrew of the Hebrews," looked, with contempt for its presumption, and with indignation for its popular effect. Saul would have infinitely rather undertaken to save the world with a roll of the Rabbinical law, than with Christ's commission in his hand.

But the vision and the voice converted Saul into Paul ; and was there ever such a sudden and wonderful transformation ? Paul comprehended the grand energy of the Gospel. Paul looked at it from the Cross itself, and in the light which had blinded his eyes only to

illumine his soul. Paul understood its power over the people, without the aid of human philosophy. Paul saw no illusion in the marvels of the Pentecostal day. Its cloven tongues and strange tones were alike intelligible to him. Paul saw the Cross in its spiritual glory. Paul saw Jesus of Nazareth stretched upon it as the world's Saviour. Paul considered the commission of Christ to His disciples as transcending, in obligation, every command of human authority. At all this, Paul, the new man, the self-denying Apostle, the enthusiastic Christian, looked, with faith in its power and gratitude for its grace. Paul would have infinitely rather undertaken to save the world with the story of the Cross, than with all the wisdom of Hillel, the philosophy of Plato, and the poetry of Homer, upon his lips.

Paul, my brethren, is the grand representative of the Apostolic pulpit. What he thought, what he felt, what he believed, what he preached, what he did, the minister of Jesus Christ should think, and feel, and believe, and

preach, and do, to-day and evermore, until the tongue of the living preacher is mute forever! He exalted the Cross so far above every instrumentality for the redemption of man from the ignorance, misery, and shame, and final woe, into which sin had plunged him, that he bound his soul, as it were, with a solemn oath, to seek and use no meaner instrumentality in his whole ministry.

The pulpit and the Cross of Christ are closely linked together by the two bonds of Divine commission and Apostolic practice. To undo those bonds, to divorce the pulpit from the Cross for any purpose, however noble in the estimation of human wisdom, however dear to the heart of human philanthropy, however sacred to the beating bosom of humanity, however imperative by the will of the world,—is to put asunder what God hath joined together; is to deny the wisdom which ordained the Gospel, as the remedy for human woes,—only made more incurable by human endeavours to alleviate them, for four thousand

years ; is to put human wisdom above Divine ; man's philanthropy above God's mercy ; humanity above immortality ; the will of the world above the authority of God. Where is the man that dares to do this ? Let him stand forth and confront the Apostle of the Gentiles ; and when he has vaunted, in all the eloquence of speech, the freedom of the pulpit to thunder forth its anathemas against political men and political measures ; to launch its bolts of indignation against legislative enactments ; to shoot its arrows of sarcasm at ministers of the law ; to impoverish language for epithets of scorn and invective in the service of human interests ; to ally itself to the forum and the rostrum for the advancement of schemes of civil or national advantage ; to lend its sacred influence to sanctify the clamours of the multitude, shouting for partisan issues ; to suspend its diviner messages for a season, that it may proclaim the doctrines of humanity ; to put the Cross aside, that it may display the pole of Liberty ; to forget the Divine martyr of Cal-

vary, that it may canonize some bleeding advocate of political reform ; when he has boasted of the license of the pulpit to do all this, the Apostle shall lift his earnest eyes into the face of the time-server, and exclaim, “ God forbid that *I* should *glory* save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ;”* for “ Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is *this grace* given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ; to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”†

The end of the pulpit is the glory of God—in the complete exhibition of His manifold wisdom to the angelic hosts—by the church. To nothing less than this aim, did Paul ever lend his sanctified intellect and his consecrated spirit. The riches of Christ were not only inexhaustible in his view, but unsearchable—so immeasurably vast and glorious, that the most eager and protracted en-

* Galatians vi. 14.

† Ephesians iii. 6, 8.

deavours of his mind and heart to explore them were ineffectual. The pulpit is exalted by God Himself, to an immeasurable height above the platforms of human wisdom, and he who dares to bring it down to a level with the loftiest of them all, is guilty of accommodating the Divine plan for man's enfranchisement, to man's own method. God will raise rebels to His favour only by the power of the Cross. Man would fain lift himself to heaven by self-inspired efforts, through a beautiful but specious process of humanitarian reforms, through political freedom, civilization, education, morality. When the minister of Christ says to the statesman, or to the politician, "I am with you in your patriotic schemes, and I pledge you the power of the pulpit under my charge, for their advancement," that minister perverts the pulpit from its holy mission, and gives God's glory to another. Christian statesmanship and sanctified political economy are acceptable to God in their own sphere, and He will employ and bless them, for the promotion

of the national good ; but the highest legislative wisdom, and the subtlest skill of the political teacher, which are yet not baptized in the blood of Christ, are an offence unto God ; and any alliance of a sacred, heaven-annointed pulpit, with an unregenerated human philanthropy, God “will not away with ! It is iniquity !”

Let it not be supposed that in thus exalting and isolating the pulpit, I claim any honour for the preacher, beyond what God has conferred upon him, counting him worthy, putting him into the ministry. In himself, he is a man only ; a man to feel, to weep, to err, like his fellows. With them he may and must cherish every true human sympathy, and the more intensely that he is a minister. As a man, he may and must take a deep interest in all human development and amelioration. But as a minister of the New Testament, in the sacred pulpit, on the watch-tower of immortality, he has to deal with men in their relations to God, and in their obligations to the Cross. There, he is God’s

ambassador--bold, because he is in God's stead--loving, tender, and gentle, because he stands up for the man, Christ Jesus! There he should stand, with his eye fixed upon Calvary--with his heart bursting with unutterable pity for his fellow men, not groaning in human bondage, not galled with iron fetters, not bruised by the heel of earthly tyrant, not crushed by political burdens, not dying from gaping flesh wounds, not perishing by human violence, but, forgetting all these harrowing spectacles,—blind and deaf and dumb to these melancholy images of horror, in the more incalculably fearful remembrance and realization of their condition, as bound hand and foot in the chains of Satan, bruised by the coil of the Old Serpent, crushed by the burdens of guilt, dying from the soul-wounds of sin, perishing by the demoniacal rage of Hell, there he should stand, and point these helpless, hopeless victims of spiritual slavery and violence to the only means of deliverance, the only source of salvation--the Cross of Christ.

The need of the world, for the salvation which comes through the Gospel, is infinitely great and urgent. Every soul that departs from its human tabernacle, with its sins uncancelled by the blood of atonement—and such a departure is reckoned for almost every moment of passing time—is lost forever to every hope of freedom and happiness. Upon that unforgiven soul the chains of Satan are riveted to all eternity, and it will clank them unceasingly in the prison-house of Hell. What minister of the Gospel who believes this, will dare to trifle with these imperilled souls, for the sake of improving the poor clay tenements in which they sojourn here for a very little season? While he is concerned about their temporal estate, their social condition, they may pass through the invisible gate into that dark land, where social distinctions are all merged into the horrible and interminable monotony of Satan's bondage. There is no time to be lost in the great work of the Gospel ministry. An archangel, with the divinest capacities of

feeling and utterance and action, would find every energy taxed, to the uttermost, if he should be sent to earth with Paul's commission laid upon his soul. How then shall a man—a worm of the dust—prove sufficient for this work? I answer: Only in the strength and spirit of his Master, by an unfaltering fidelity to his specific duty—which is, to “turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”

The grandest name; the highest civilization; the broadest territorial acquisition; the rarest refinement; the most comprehensive intelligence; the most perfect education; the most astonishing advance in science and art and letters; the most unrestricted personal, political and religious freedom; the freest speech and the freest press and the freest pulpit, which the most Utopian statesman could imagine, or the most highly-favoured people could realize, under the smiling heavens—all these would be only splendid woes and concentrated curses to that people, without the

liberty of the Son of God! He holds the only charter which can give a nation a freedom worth having,—and His Ministers are the executors and distributers of its divine franchise to men and nations. Grant that this land—the American people—is rapidly approximating the magnificent ideal I have presented. Every safe step of its progress is in the light of the Gospel. Extinguish that light, turn the churches into freedom-clubs, and the pulpits into political platforms, and, as surely as there is a God who reigns above us, the solution of the problem of true freedom in this western world would be worked out, speedily, to a dire result of desolation and destruction.

As for me, much as I love human progress and much as I delight in the magnificent victories of mind over matter, I would rather go from a condition of social and political bondage with the franchise of the Gospel to the liberty of the Sons of God in heaven, than fall from the loftiest pinnacle of human liberty, dragged downward, forever and forever, by

the heavy fetters of an evil and unregenerate nature.

The ministers of Christ will go from the pulpit to the Judgment bar. The interval, though long to mortal estimate, will be short to their disembodied spirits. At that tribunal they will appear with their congregations, each forming a unit in the innumerable myriads of the quick and the dead. When the great white throne is set, and He, into whose hands the Father hath committed all judgment, shall appear on it, clad no longer in the bloody vestments of sacrifice, but in the shining garments of glory, He will summon His ministers and make requisition for souls committed to their charge. What will it avail that servant of the sanctuary who, looking around, shall recognize a million, from whose bodies he helped to strike the chains of man's oppression, or a million others upon whom he was instrumental in conferring social benefits,—what will it avail him, I ask, to say, "There, Lord, are the witnesses of my zeal," while few, if any, of his earthly flock, are

found among the blood-washed throng of the redeemed ? Will that minister hear the welcome plaudit, “ Well done, good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things,—I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ? ”*

Turn your eyes to the wild waves of the sea. A homeward-bound ship, bearing in her bosom a multitude of passengers, draws nigh to the British coast. The sky is obscured by clouds, and there is a man in the foretop, watching for a beacon on the Irish shore, for which the ship is standing under heavy canvas. But, hark ! there breaks a sudden cry upon the air, and “ Fire ! Fire ! Fire ! ” is sounded through the ship. The frightened passengers rush hither and thither in wild dismay. Above their screams there swells the clear voice of the commander, in trumpet tones. The sailors, with swift but silent haste, perform his bidding, and speedily the cause of the alarm is discovered and removed.

Upon the still unquiet atmosphere there

* Matt. xxv. 21.

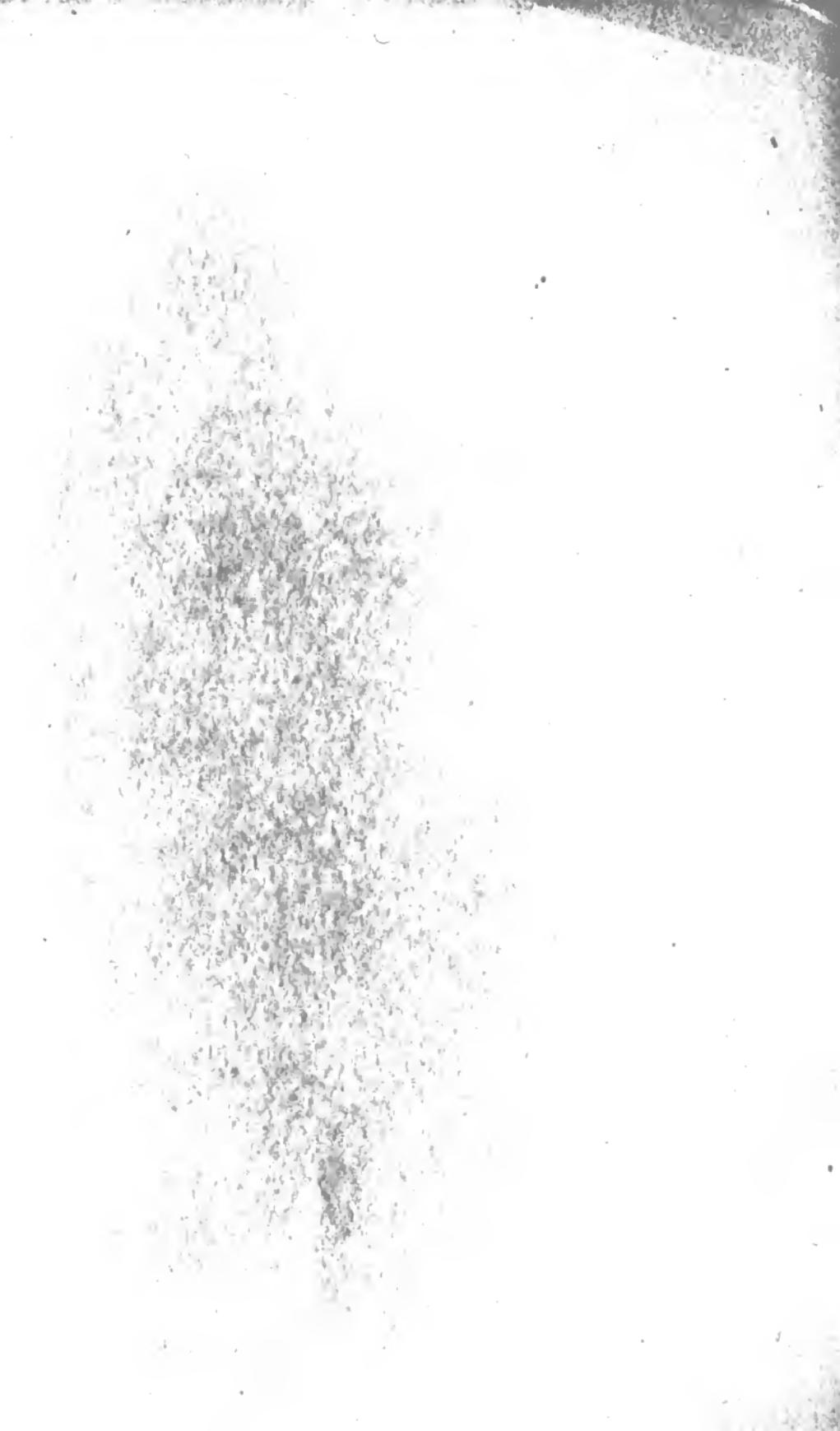
comes another shout, — “Breakers ahead!” and instantly the ship goes about to avoid danger. The man in the foretop, heedless of the commotion beneath him, clung to his post, and the ship is saved from destruction upon a low reef of rocks, not a mile distant. Listen, now, to the thanks which the imperilled passengers are lifting up to God, and to that heroic man, whom not the appalling cry of “Fire” brought down from his high station of vigilance. Had he deserted his watch and the ship gone upon the reef, those thanks would be reproaches from drowning, dying men; and they would sound more loudly in his ears than his own death-knell rung out by the maddened waves.

My beloved hearers, a myriad ships are sailing to-day over life’s tempestuous ocean towards the shores of Eternity. They are bearing thither immortal souls. Every ship, through God’s mercy, has its man in the foretop, looking out for the headlands at the entrance of the Harbour of Life.

We, my brethren of the ministry, are men in

the foretop. Each of us, to whom God has committed the pastoral office, is a sentinel over precious souls on the great life voyage. Shall we come down at the sound of commotion below, and leave the ship of our charge to bound forward, to certain destruction, upon the black reef of Hell Gate ! Or, shall we rather stand aloft, with eye rifting the gloom and looking out for the white beacons of immortality, that the ship in which we sail may glide peacefully and safely between them into the river of death, whose waters lave the blest shores of the city of our God !

I make answer for myself, if not for you all. *I* will not quit my post aloft, while God gives me strength to stand and watch : and may He, who has committed to me my solemn trust, grant, that in that day of days, to which I have just referred, I may stand before the blazing throne, surrounded by all, to whom I ministered in holy things upon earth, and be able to say, with joy, “ Here, Lord, am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me ! ”





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